Title: Summer of Fire

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RI.5.1, RI.5.2, RI.5.3, RI.5.4, RI.5.5, RI.5.7, RI.5.8; RF.5.4; W.5.2, W.5.4, W.5.9; SL.5.1, SL.5.6; L.5.1, L.5.2, L.5.4, L.5.5

Teacher Instructions

*Refer to the Introduction for further details.*

**Before Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students or prepare them for what they will learn. This is a description for teachers, about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing this task. This non-fiction piece is accessible to fifth graders when it is chunked and worked with carefully by you.

Big Ideas and Key Understandings

Fires have always been a part of the Yellowstone region, but in the summer of 1988, the fires were not “business as usual” .

Synopsis

This article describes the out-of-control fires that took place during the summer of 1988. It focuses on the unpredictable fires of the Yellowstone Region. Firefighters and local communities have developed ways to deal with the forest fires, but the size of these fires made them take another look at their current policy of dealing with forest fires.

1. Read the main selection aloud, then have your students read it in the section chunks you select. Make sure your selections make sense and take advantage of the text structure itself.
2. Re-read the main selection text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Vocabulary.

**During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire main selection text independently.
2. Teacher reads the main selection text aloud with students following along.

(Depending on how complex the text is and the amount of support needed by students, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2.)

1. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions and returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e.: whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.). The variety should be represented by the motto: Re-Read, Think, Discuss, Write

Text Dependent Questions

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| **Text Dependent Questions** | **Answers** |
| In what ways was the weather in the summer of 1988 different from ordinary summers at Yellowstone? In what ways were the winters in the 1980’s different from usual winters? Discuss how these unusual weather patterns made a difference in the events described in this article. | Summers in Yellowstone were usually short and rainy. Winters were usually long and snowy. In the summer of 1988, there was a shortage of rainy days. All through the 1980’s, the winters weren’t as snowy as usual. This meant that the conditions on the ground were very dry. |
| What were the causes of each of the fires described in detail in the article? | Lightning strikes caused the first series of fires. The other fire mentioned was caused by a careless woodcutter throwing away a cigarette. |
| Explain why the park policy about ignoring fires needed to be changed during the sequence of events in Yellowstone in the summer of 1988. | Because of the weather and the lack of rain, in the summer of 1988, park officials decided that they had to fight all fires whether they were wildfires or caused by human carelessness. The fires were not putting themselves out and they were putting a lot of people and historic buildings in danger. They couldn’t rely on rain or let the fires out. |
| Name two techniques the article mentions that firefighters used to fight the Yellowstone forest fires. Describe how each one work. | They used helicopters and airplanes to drop chemicals to damp down fires. On the ground, firefighters were wetting down trees and buildings to try to slow the fires down. |
| There are two pages in this article that are full-page photographs. Describe the photos and make a list of the information you could get from the pictures alone. What emotions, if any, did the photos stir in you? | Answers will vary but should display careful observation of the photo and not a reliance on the descriptions in the article’s text. |
| Why didn’t the buildings around Old Faithful burn? | The firefighters made a huge effort there to get the buildings wet and save the important building around Old Faithful. But the fire was bigger than that. At the last moment, the wind shifted and the fire turned away from the buildings. |
| Use the map to list 3 fires that occurred in the Yellowstone Region. | Fan Fire, Madison Fire, North Fork Fire, Falls Fire, Red-Shoshone Fire, Continental-Ridge Fire, Cub Fire, Lovely Fire, Clover-Mist Fire |
| What happened during September 10, 1988 that made it “begin as another bad day” but end as “a day of hope”? | The fires were close to and threatening the park headquarters. There were supposed to be high winds, which would fan the flames. But then it started to rain hard and get colder. By the next morning, it was even snowing. Nature put an end to the fires at last. |
| Read the last page of the article carefully. The author says, “Yellowstone needs fire.” What proof does she offer for her argument? Do you agree with her? Why or why not? Use the article itself to explain. | She clearly makes a case that even though the fires were horrible and huge, most of the park was not touched. Even where the fires did great damage, it did not destroy the plants and even the animals who lived in those areas. So the fires were not as bad as people thought, and that no areas of Yellowstone Park were ruined |

Vocabulary

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|  | **KEY WORDS ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTANDING**  Words addressed with a question or task | **WORDS WORTH KNOWING**  General teaching suggestions are provided in the Introduction |
| **TEACHER PROVIDES DEFINITION**  not enough contextual clues provided in the text |  | Raged, growled, plains, prairies  Soared, tinder  Cold fronts, boulder, canopy  Geyser  Ember, veered  Ember, headquarters, junction, ruins, crossroads |
| **STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING**  sufficient context clues are provided in the text |  | Withering, dwindle  policy  snags, gigantic, oxygen, gusts  bearing down, rocketed  churning, damp down |

Culminating Task

* Follow up on the final question on the question sheet and do more research about the effects of wildfires in the past few years. Write a letter to your Senator or Representative and lay out the policy you believe is best for firefighting on land the government owns and very few people live on. You can use evidence from this article or from the research you did about fires recently. Make sure you use formal and respectful business letter form (your teacher can help you) and that you find out from either your phone book or from the official website: [www.**senate**.gov/general/contact\_information/**senators**\_cfm.cfm](http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm) for Senators and [www.house.gov/**representatives**/find/](http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/) for your representative. Create a timeline of events for the summer of 1988 in Yellowstone. Use the months of the summer and fall as your units for your timeline. You should be able to list at least 8 different events on your timeline.

Additional Tasks

Research what the policy is in the National Park System now about fighting or ignoring fires. How has this changed since the fires described in this article? You can go to the National Park Service website and search by park, or you can research “Smoky the Bear” and see what he has to do with fighting fires in the national parks.

Note to Teacher

There is an unusual amount of both academic vocabulary and domain specific vocabulary in this piece (Tier 2 and Tier 3 words). These are high value words that students will see over and over in the years to come. Any time you can take to expose your students to the words out that appear in the vocabulary grid and discuss them will be time well spent.